

[Opinion](#)
[Spirituality](#)



(Pixabay/Creative Commons)



by Amy Morris-Young

[View Author Profile](#)

[**Join the Conversation**](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

August 18, 2018

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

A month or so ago, my daughter Chelsea experienced what I can only call a "Grown-Up Week." Within the space of a few days, her car broke down, her dentist told her that she needed some very expensive work on her teeth, and a major appliance in her home chose that moment to die a particularly gruesome death.

She texted me as each of these events occurred, and after the third financial calamity, her text read: "Whyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy?!"

I responded with the only answer I had: "Sorry, honey. This is how you know that All is Right with the World."

While that may not have been the most comforting response, isn't it true for most of us that we never seem to get to handle one challenge at a time? They always seem to come in a cluster. There is that saying about how everything comes in threes. In my experience, we can count on at least that many things with which to cope, all at once.

My only counsel to my daughter was to keep breathing and find perspective. I have long said that "Any day your kids or grandkids are not in a children's hospital is a good day."

The time I spent there in 1990 — with my twin sons who did not survive — has shaped and informed everything since. I find that I compare all traumatic events to that elemental one, and they usually measure up as mostly just inconvenient, not tragic.

When your beloveds are sick or hurt, does anything else matter, really? All the other details — the ones that a moment ago felt so important and urgent — just fall away. And a few days in a hospital full of the sickest possible kids, and the hardest working doctors and nurses, can feel like a lot longer. A lifetime, in a way. Encapsulated from start to finish in a memory that changes you, forever.

Well, last week was another one of those weeks.

The five days our 3-year-old granddaughter and her parents spent at Seattle Children's Hospital feel to my heart and body like about a month. The good news is that Mary is recovering well from her surgery. And so are her parents.

Her Momma and Daddy (my daughter Chelsea and her husband Matt) are exhausted but have that sort of translucent glow of surviving a marathon, together. A team of two made one, they came through that terrifying sleep-deprived ordeal, alternating bathroom breaks and coffee runs, laughing at jokes only they got, united in desperate depthless love for their tiny brave, bossy, beautiful girl. Five days. A lifetime. All three are forever changed.

As for me, the parent and grandparent watching and praying from the sidelines, all I feel now is gratitude. To God. To the amazing medical staff. And to my own personal traffic angels for keeping me alive on the 160-mile round trip between our home and Seattle.

I just have to say if traffic is any indicator of how people treat each other, we are all in big trouble.

Now, I fancy myself a pretty calm gal. But I dare anyone to drive two hours plus, each way, in gnarly urban traffic and stay completely One With Rama.

I started out each day with the best intentions and love for my fellow man. But, dang!

When the lady in the black BMW cut me off, so that I had to literally stand on my brakes not to hit her, I yelled at my windshield: "Hope you make it to the hospital in time to deliver that baby!"

[Tweet this](#)

In the early stages of my journey, I attempted to use humor (at least I find myself funny) to maintain my zen.

When the lady in the black BMW cut me off, so that I had to literally stand on my brakes not to hit her, I yelled at my windshield: "Hope you make it to the hospital in time to deliver that baby!"

When the guy with the earbuds and sonic blue Honda Accord zoomed in and out among the rest of us like we were orange cones on a racetrack, I hollered: "Hey, hope you make it to the toilet! Avoid those ghost peppers next time!"

But when the dueling sportscars driven by equivalently brainiac teenagers used the freeway as their own personal jousting arena, playing chicken at 90 miles per hour, ignoring their own imminent peril and ours, I sadly and predictably lost all my karmic coolness. I heard myself screaming: "What happened to 'do unto others,' buttheads?!"

I'm sorry. I know this is not what Jesus would do. He would bless them and send them on their beloved way.

Or would he?

Our son Nick has autism, and didn't start talking until he was about six. Then, when he did talk, it was an odd mix of movie dialogue and a thing called echolalia, that is, repeating back what he just heard, like a parrot, over and over, out of context.

So, when he was in fifth grade, his teacher pulled me aside one afternoon, and said, "Um, Nick is calling his classmates 'butthead.' A lot. Like all the time. Can you work on that, please?"

As Nick and I walked together through the school parking lot, I asked him, "Hey, your teacher says you are calling everyone 'butthead.' Where did you learn that? Who told you that word?!"

He just looked at me.

Advertisement

As we were exiting, a car entering the parking lot lurched right in front of us. I hit the brakes and yelled — you guessed it — "Butthead!"

No wonder he looked at me. Duh.

In most interactions with other humans, I really do try to remember to ask myself "What would Jesus do?" But in traffic, especially when I am already scared and stressed and tired, it is hard.

Last week, as I drove back and forth to the hospital that resonates with both heartbreaking memories and hope for my darling granddaughter's future health, I ultimately found myself just praying.

Prayers for Mary, for her parents, for myself and everyone who loves them. For the doctors and nurses and staff who deal with the worst of the worst illnesses and injuries that kids can get, every day. And prayers for all those other crazy, scared, stressed, tired drivers out there.

And I asked myself, "What would Jesus do?" if he were here, in this nutty traffic, during insane rush hour?

I pictured him driving peacefully among us, spreading love and forgiveness and hope.

I see him in a powder blue Kia Soul. He has one of those COEXIST bumper stickers on the back, and his license plate reads: GLDN RUL.

[Amy Morris-Young graduated from and taught writing at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.]